Children's Readings for the Week of Prayer

December 4-12, 2020.

Spiritual Growth



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Children's Readings for the Week of Prayer

December 4-12, 2020

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Introduction

The year 2020 has been very hard for many of us. Soon we will begin a new year. We don't know what will happen in 2021, but we do know that Jesus will be with us.

Before the new year begins, it's important for God's people to gather with other believers to study and pray during this Week of Prayer. The readings were prayerfully written with the desire that readers will be blessed by God and filled with hope and courage.

In this edition, we will read seven articles about Peter's Ladder in 2 Peter 1:5-7. These verses describe the spiritual ladder of sanctification that all must climb to reach heaven. Jesus is this ladder, and each step teaches us more about Him. He wants to see all of these eight values in us: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. As every believer, by God's grace, works on the plan of addition, and climbs Peter's Ladder one step at a time, God promises to bless the saints' efforts through His plan of multiplication. If we try hard to obey Him, He will multiply and bless our efforts—and we will be like Him.

This week is very important to all members of the church and the children too. During this time, we encourage you to pray at least three times every day and to read your Bible three times each day as well. You can do this with your family, with some friends, or just by yourself.

Sabbath, December 12, will be a special Sabbath. On this day many of the adults will fast. Fasting means to go without food for a certain period of time so our minds will be clear and we can get closer to God. You may not be able to go the whole day without eating, but maybe you can try to fast for one or two meals. Talk about this with your parents.

After the last reading, an offering will be collected that will be used to share the gospel around the world. Start thinking now about how much you will give for this offering. Because it is a thanksgiving offering, many people write a favorite Bible verse on their offering envelopes. These Bible verses will be read at the end of the church service. Do you have a favorite Bible verse? What will you write on your envelope?

The Education Department in cooperation with the Ministerial Research Institute has worked very hard to bring you this Week of Prayer for children. We pray that God will bless you during this important week.

In His service,

Margie Holmstroem Seely

Director of the Education Department

Special thanks to the following for their wonderful contributions to this project:

Ixzelt Aldana, Saraí Archila, Margarita Barreto, Marthica Cabrera, Manuela Di Franca, Evelyn Post Holmstroem, Dorcas Luboya, Stella Morudu, Pastor Danilo Monterroso, Alyssa Seely, Raquel Sosa, Persia Suárez, Diana Beets, Daniel Terbea, Johnly Juance, Edna Peña, Silas Teixeira, Annabella Grace Maramis, Stefania Di Franca, Lorenza Perrotta, Anthony Gallo, Elena Zaloznaya, Tatiana Sanchez, Gladys Joy Ortega, Alden Jay Ortega, Miguel and Eunice Cabrera, Elisa Gallo, Miriam Bordonaro, Elisabeth and Susanne Krause, Meriam Dinev, Jessica Gessner, and Jacqueline Hunger.

Reading 1

Friday, December 4, 2020



"Spiritual Knowledge"

Written by: E.G. White Summarized by: Margie Holmstroem Seely U.S.A.

While the people of Jerusalem slept, one man made his way through the darkened streets. His footsteps were quiet as he listened to the sounds of the night. Although led by the light of the moon, he stayed in the shadows, afraid that someone might see him. Silently, he left the city and headed towards the Mount of Olives. It was here, he had been told, that he would find Jesus.

Nicodemus had earned a high place in Jewish society. He was rich and one of the leaders in Israel. Those who knew Nicodemus probably thought he was happy with all the honors he had gained. But deep inside, he felt that something was missing.

An Incomplete Education

Nicodemus had received the best education Israel could give. As a child, he had learned Jewish laws, traditions, and ceremonies, and he lived out what he had been taught was true. He was a strict Pharisee and was proud of his good works. As an Israelite, he was sure he had a place in the kingdom of God. "He felt that he needed no change" (Desire of Ages, p. 143).

But really, the way he believed was a result of the way he had been taught. There were many schools in Israel, but the rabbis did not teach in the way God wanted. They taught the traditions of men instead of the truth of God. And so, the education Nicodemus had received was incomplete. He lacked spiritual knowledge.

What Is Spiritual Knowledge?

Webster's Dictionary tells us that "knowledge" means to know something really well. When we study something, no matter what the topic is, we have to spend time with it—and it will become a part of us.

When I was a university student, I took an anatomy course. I spent much time learning all the systems of the body. One day, one of my friends, who was tired of studying, asked our teacher, "How do we know when we have studied enough?" He smiled and said, "When you start dreaming about it." In the same way, when we study spiritual things, they weave themselves into the very fibers of our beings, become a part of us, and change who we are. Do we study the Bible enough so that we dream about Jesus?

How Do We Obtain Spiritual Knowledge?

If you were to visit one of our IMS schools with me today, you would see children learning at different levels. In kindergarten, we would watch students naming the letters of the alphabet and learning how to read simple words. In the third-grade classroom, we would find students reading short stories and writing sentences. However, when we got to the high school, the students there would be studying thick textbooks and writing long essays.

Like climbing a ladder, students must move upward and onward, always learning new and more difficult lessons. During each year of school, students change from knowing less to knowing more.

It's the same with studying the Bible. When we first come to Christ, we understand only the simple things of Scripture. But, as we grow in Him, we understand the deeper truths of His Word. The more time we spend studying God's Word, the more we grow in our understanding of spiritual knowledge, and the more like Him we become.

Spiritual Knowledge Prepares Us for Heaven

What we study changes us. The Bible "is full of knowledge" (Fundamentals of Education, p. 449). All who study it will find that their minds become stronger. As we read, the Holy Spirit will help us understand and change. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Spiritual knowledge changes us so that we want to go to Heaven. If we never read the Bible, we would not be interested in Heaven. We would want only the things here on earth. But when we study God's Word, the Holy Spirit prepares us to live with the angels in a pure and holy place.

A Final Thought

The Bible tells us, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). The knowledge this verse speaks about is spiritual knowledge. Today, just like in the time of Nicodemus, so much knowledge is taught in the public schools, but it is not the type that will make us want to be with God. Now, more than ever, we must make time to study our Bibles. The spiritual knowledge we get from reading its pages will open our eyes, change us to be like Christ, and prepare us for Heaven. We have no time to lose. We must learn to have a heavenly character here on earth before we can go to Heaven. "Begin ... at once.... Educate your mind to love the Bible, to love the prayer-meeting, to love the hour of meditation, and above all, the hour when the soul communes with God. Become heavenly-minded now if you would unite with the heavenly choir in the mansions above" (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 267).

Complete the Bible verse.

"Desus replied, "Very ____ I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they ____ again. 20hn 3:3

Activities

Spiritual Knowledge

ACTIVITY: Unscramble the words and write the letters in the boxes; then, fill in the words in the empty boxes below to complete the Bible verses. Follow the symbols key.



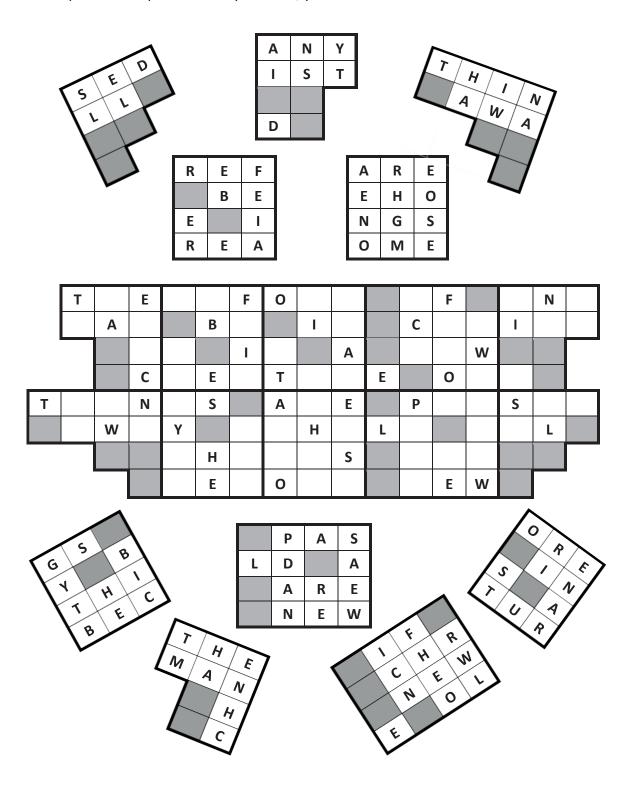
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How Can We Obtain Spiritual Knowledge?

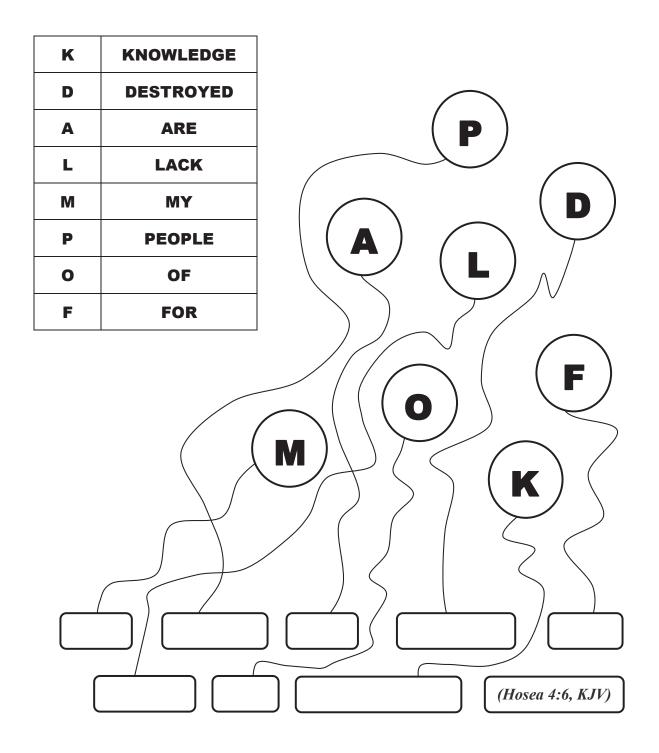
2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

ACTIVITY: Look carefully at each puzzle piece and write the letters of each one in the correct place in the puzzle. Once you finish, you will be able to read the Bible verse.



One Final Thought

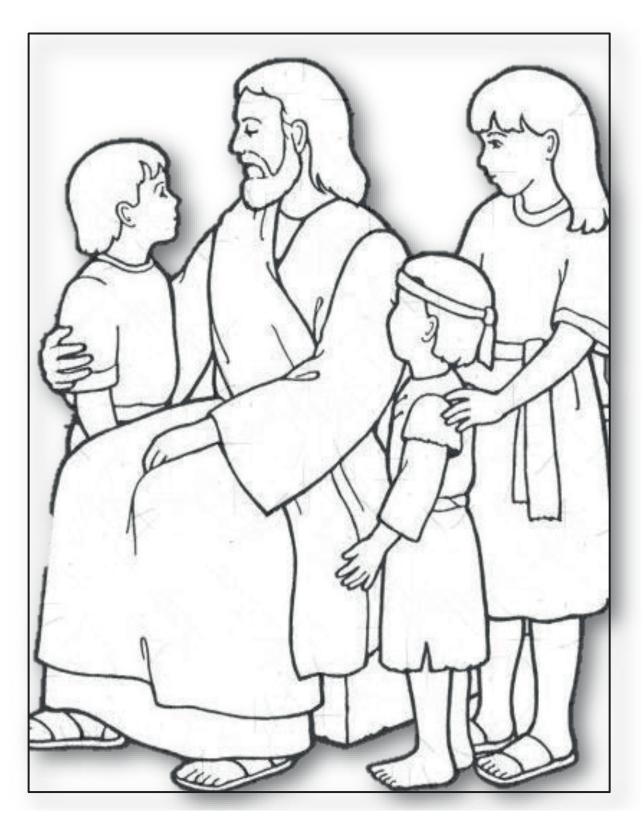
ACTIVITY: Follow the threads and write each word in the corresponding box to read the Bible verse. Make sure you follow the reference letters.



Jesus Teaches Nicodemus



Jesus Teaches the Children



Reading 2

Sabbath, December 5, 2020



"Growing in Faith"

Written by: Pastor Yoni Delgado | U.S.A. Summarized by: Pastor Danilo Monterroso, Guatemala

Through faith, let us "... grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Ephesians 4:15.

Introduction

How many times do you children say, "Look! I'm growing! I'm taller! I'm already as tall as you are!" And I know that you want to grow taller than your brothers and sisters, your parents, and your friends. Am I right? It's good that you want to grow up. Do you know that Jesus was a child like you and that He also grew up? Let's look at the Gospel of Luke 2:52. It says, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

Let's see in which areas Jesus grew. The Bible says that He grew:

- 1. In wisdom.
- 2. In stature.
- 3. Spiritually towards God.
- 4. Socially with other people.

Dear children, just as our Lord Jesus grew in these different areas, you also may grow. In this lesson, we are going to see that it is necessary for you to grow in height, but it is very important to grow in the other areas as well. The most important thing is that you grow spiritually.

Physical Growth

Have you seen a plant grow? For a plant to grow, it needs several things. Let's see what the book Steps to Christ has to say on page 67. "The plants and flowers grow not by their own care or anxiety or effort, but by receiving that which God has furnished to minister to their life."

Have you ever watered a plant? Why do you think it is so important to give plants water? What would happen to a plant if you didn't water it? Would it live long? The answer is no, no, no! Plants need water in order to live and grow.

If you want to grow, you have to eat very well. Eat healthy foods, drink pure water, eat fruits and vegetables, have a regular bedtime. All this will help you to have good health and be able to give your body what it needs to grow.

Spiritual Growth

As Jesus grew taller, he also gained wisdom that helped Him in His spiritual growth. In the gospel of John 15:4-5, we read, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

"When we live by faith on the Son of God, the fruits of the Spirit will be seen in our lives; not one will be missing." The Desire of Ages, p. 676.

That is why spiritual growth is very important. If a child wants to grow spiritually, he has to remain in Jesus. The Bible says that if you separate from Him, you cannot grow. You will not bear fruit. You will stay small and will not be able to be a friend of Jesus.

One day some women came running with their children looking for Jesus, but something unexpected happened. The disciples did not let the women and their children come to Jesus. But when Jesus saw what the disciples were doing, He called to them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Luke 18:15-17 NIV.

Isn't it wonderful to know, children, that the kingdom of heaven is yours! To receive it, you will have to grow up to be spiritual children. And how do children grow spiritually? Well, first of all, they have to be friends of Jesus. They have to be obedient children and keep the commandments, respect their parents, and do their chores at home. Let's read the following testimony: "We may know more and more of Jesus through an interested searching of the Scriptures, and then following the ways of truth and righteousness therein revealed. Those who are ever growing in grace will be steadfast in the faith, and moving forward." Messages to Young People, p. 121.

Conclusion

I want to tell you a very interesting story that happened many years ago. In the days of our friend Jesus, there lived a man named Zacchaeus. He was very intelligent and had a lot of money. He was an adult, but he had a problem that worried him. He had not grown very tall. He was a short man, and many times his friends made fun of him because he was so small. Even some children were taller than he. It also seemed that his spiritual life had not grown much either. This man became very sad.

One day he heard about a very famous teacher named Jesus, who cared about the problems of chil-dren and adults as well. Zacchaeus decided to go looking for this teacher. Because Zacchaeus was so small, he ran into many problems. One of them was that there were many people around him, and they were all taller than he was. This made it very difficult for him to see Jesus. So, he began to think. "How can I make Jesus my friend?" he wondered. And, suddenly, it occurred to him to climb up

into the branches of a sycamore tree. Let's read the rest of the story in Luke 19:5-6 NIV. "When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly."

Dear little friend, how many times do we worry about our problems that make us feel as small as Zacchaeus? Sometimes we want to be friends with Jesus, and we go out to look for Him, but there our sins block us from seeing Jesus. I want to tell you that Jesus loves you, and He does every-thing possible to find you. Just as He met Zacchaeus at the sycamore tree and told him to come down because He was going to eat at his house, Jesus also wants to enter into your heart. Do you want Jesus to come to your heart? You have to welcome Him. You must grow in faith, and then the promise of Luke 19:9-10 NIV will be said of you also. "Jesus said..., 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'"

May God bless you as you grow!

Complete the Bible verse.

"And heal the ____ that are therein, and say unto them, The ___ of God is ___ unto you."

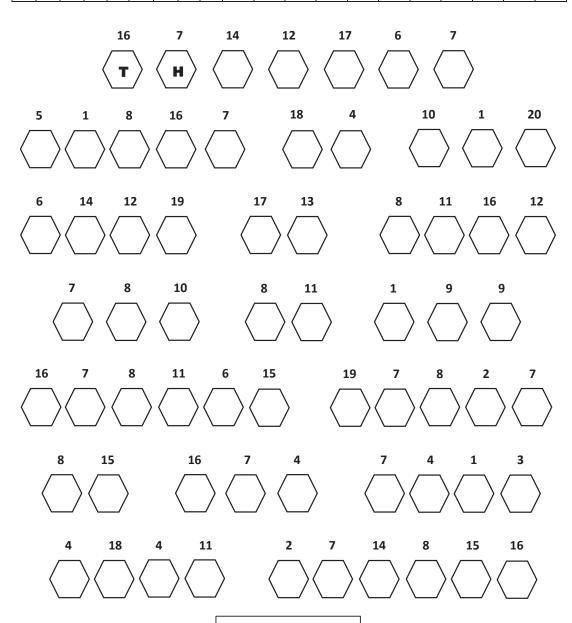
Luke 10:9.

Activities

Growing in Faith

ACTIVITY: Every number represents a letter. Write the corresponding letter to each number to read the Bible verse. The first two letters are included to help you!

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
A	С	D	Ш	F	G	н	ı	L	M	N	0	P	R	S	т	U	V	w	Y



Ephesians 4:15, KJV

ACTIVITY: Cross out all the **K's** and **X's** to find and read the message. Then write the remaining letters in order into the puzzle boxes below. Some letters are already given.

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> > (Luke 2:52, NIV)

	J				G			
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	S					A		
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	G		A			M		

ACTIVITY: Write the missing letters in each word in the puzzles squares below, then complete the Bible verses by using the matching number for each word. The letters under the arrow points out a phrase. What is the phrase? ______.

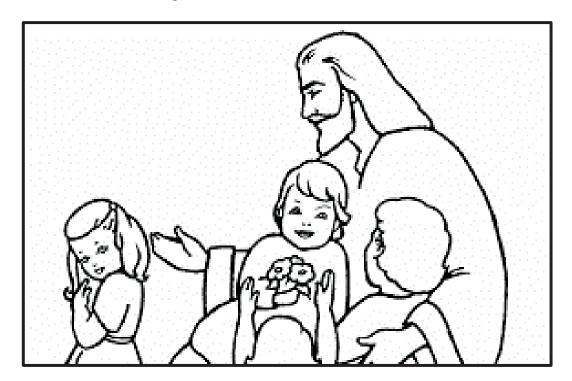
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"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No (1)_____ can (2)_____ fruit by itself; it must (3)_____ in the vine. Neither (4)_____ you bear (5)_____ (6)______ you remain in me. I am the (7)_____; you are the (8)_____. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear (9)_____ fruit; apart from (10)_____ you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5, NIV).

ACTIVITY: Crack the code by writing the numbered words in correct order into the column on the right. Follow the reference numbers and the example given.

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6	wнісн		9	
7	SEEK		3	
8	OF	51 Y.V.	13	
9	IS		7	
10	то	R11, 111	16	
11	LOST	14/1/16	10	
12	FOR		4	
13	то	77-3	15	
14	MAN	4uu)	6	
15	THAT		1	
16	AND		11	
				Luke 19:10, KJV

ACTIVITY: Color the drawing.



CRAFT ACTIVITY

Supplies: 1 sheet of green cardstock paper (for the leaves) and 1 sheet in purple (for the grapes), glue, and scissors.

Steps:

- 1. Cut out the cardstock paper into strips and roll them into spirals; arrange them into the shape of grapes and leaves, as in the first picture. Then glue the ends of each strip to secure them.
- 2. Complete the activity shown in the second picture with younger children.





Reading 3





Genuine Repentance"

Written by: E. Mtikama | Malawi Summarized by: Stella Morudu | South Africa

There was a man who had two sons. He went

to the first one and said, "Son, go and work today in the vineyard." "I will not," the son answered, but later changed his mind and went. The father went to the other son and said the same thing. That son answered, "I will, sir." But he did not go.

Repentance means to be sorry for your sin and to turn away from it. When we allow the Holy Spirit to help us, we will not repeat our mistakes. The first son repented after refusing to work in the vineyard. In the book of Genesis, we read that God was also sorry that He created man, because of his great wickedness on earth.

In the beginning

In the Old Testament, when people committed sins, they were told to "turn away from evil" and "turn to God." The blood of animals was needed to cleanse them. These animals represented the real sacrifice to come – our Saviour Jesus. Abel, Abraham, many prophets, and others looked forward to His coming. They also showed their faith with sacrifices and offerings. We must thank Jesus for His blood, because we no longer need to slaughter animals.

A gift from God

It was Sizwe's birthday, and he eagerly waited for his dad to return with a present. When he finally arrived, he wished Sizwe a happy birthday and handed over a present. Sizwe quickly opened it, and everyone around

wished to see what it was. With tears in his eyes, he said, "But, Dad ... why did you buy me a raincoat?" He threw it down and ran to his room. He wouldn't allow anyone to come in.

The following morning it began to rain heavily as Sizwe walked to school. He then remembered his father's gift and was grateful for it. He also remembered what he did the previous day and was very sorry for his behavior. He quickly ran to his father and hugged him. "Dad, I'm really sorry about yesterday. I thought you were going to buy me the toy car I once showed you. I can now see that the raincoat is much better than that car."

At times, we do not value what we receive but wish for something else. Sizwe's dad knew exactly what Sizwe needed. God gave the world the precious gift of His own Son, to lead us to repentance. Many do not appreciate this gift. We need to be grateful and lovingly help our friends to repent.

Who should repent?

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned by transgressing the law of God. We have inherited their sinful nature. We sin daily through our errors and mistakes, which are accounted as sin in the eyes of God. The Bible tells us that we're all sinners, and therefore we should all repent. When we ask God to guide us through the Holy Spirit, we shall be able to see our mistakes and then go back to Him and apologize.

Satan doesn't want us to repent. By sinning we choose him to rule us, and we become his. I don't think that any one of us wishes to belong to Satan.

The love and goodness of God

God showed His great love by sending His son to die for us. When we have done wrong things, we should feel deep sorrow for our sins and ask for forgiveness. God will accept our confessions.

We must not be like Judas, who betrayed Jesus. Although he returned the thirty pieces of silver to the priests and begged Jesus to deliver Himself from His enemies, he didn't have sorrow for his wrongful act. He only feared that punishment would come upon him for the terrible deed. The Saviour knew that Judas did not repent.

Fruits of repentance

Every tree is known by its fruits. An orange tree will bear oranges, not bananas. Since we're human beings, not trees, our 'fruits' will be seen by the things we do.

When we have repented, the following will be seen:

- 1.Love, mercy, and kindness to others.
- 2. Telling others about the saving grace of Christ.
- 3. Dependence upon the Word of God in all that we do.
- 4. Unselfishness; we will put others first.
- 5. Doing all the good things we have learned and having faith that is constantly increasing.

May God help us to bear these fruits.

Dangers of ignoring the call to repentance

As we were growing up, my sisters and I used to tease our very quiet younger brother. He reported us to our mom, and she told us to stop. My sisters stopped, but I secretly continued. One afternoon as I was playing, he asked if he could join me. As usual I began to tease him. Suddenly he punched me in the face with his fist, and I fell down. Instead of crying or running to tell mom, I just looked at him in surprise at what he had done since he had never done it before. Then I began to realize how mean I had been to him. I stood up and told him how sorry I was. I promised NEVER to tease him again. I had ignored my mom when she told me to stop and had to learn the hard way.

When we do something wrong, the Holy Spirit invites us to repent. Maybe you too have tried many times to stop doing something wrong, but you have failed. Tell Jesus about it before it is too late. He is always ready to listen and help us with our problems. We must not waste any time, because He will soon stop interceding for us.

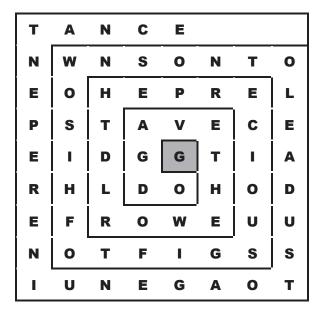
May God help us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

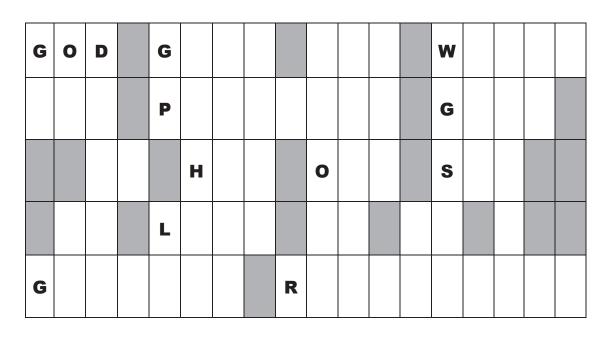
Complete the Bible verse.

"Likewise, I say unto you, _____ in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:10.

Activities

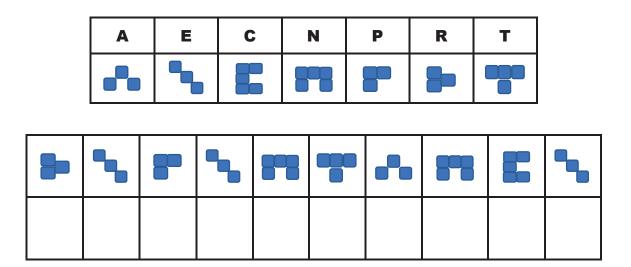
ACTIVITY: Write all the letters of the spiral in the puzzle boxes, in the same order in which they are found. The first letters are already included to help you get started!



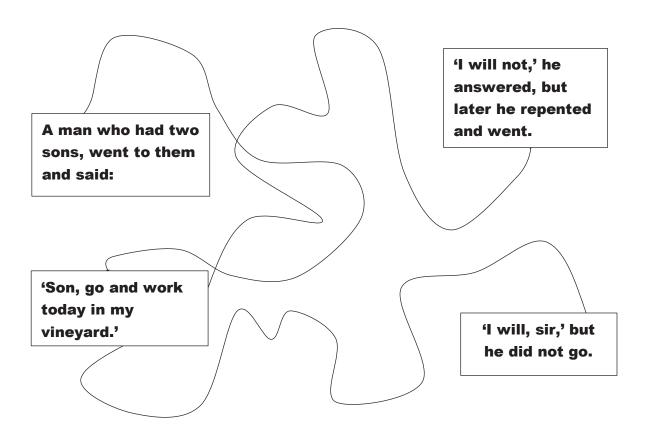


Genuine Repentance

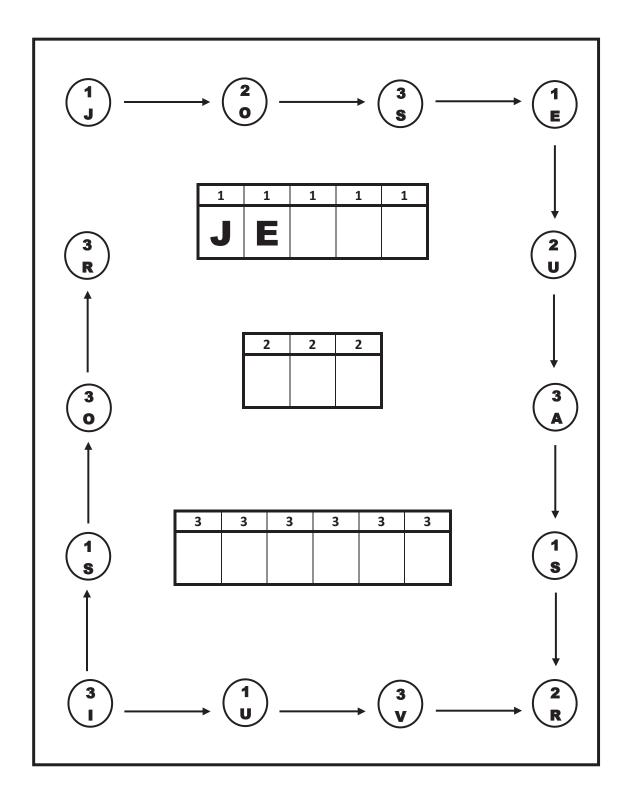
ACTIVITY: Crack the code to read the keyword for today's reading.



ACTIVITY: Color only the thread that takes you to the son that did the will of his father.



ACTIVITY: Color blue all the circles with the number 1; color green, all the circles with the number 2 and, color yellow, all the circles with the number 3. Then write each letter in the box with the same number, following the order and the direction of the arrows.

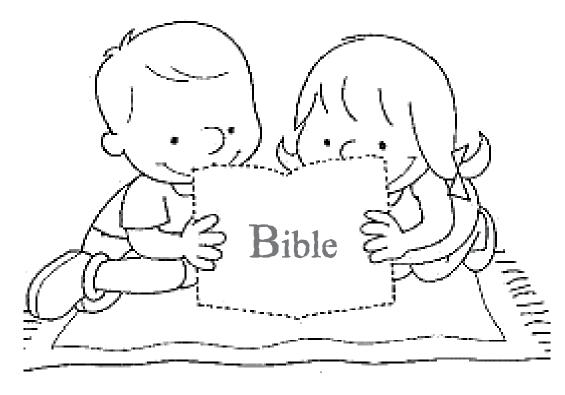


ACTIVITY: Color the drawings and study the information that is in the box below.



When we have truly repented, we will do the following:

- 1. We show love, mercy and kindness to others.
- 2. We tell others about the saving grace of Christ.
- 3. We depend on the Word of God in everything we do.
- 4. We put others first.
- 5. We do all the good things we have learned and have faith that we are constantly growing.



Reading 4

Tuesday, December 8, 2020



"Self-control"

Written by: Pastor Alfred Nawenya,

Zimbabwe

Summarized by: Persia Suárez | U.S.A.



Jade peeked in at the bright decorations. Colorful bows and streamers stretched from one corner of the room to another. A table overflowing with tasty treats was right in the center. Jade's stomach growled. Three different kinds of cakes, a bowl of candy, five varieties of chips, a mountain of candy bars, plus donuts, cookies, and vanilla ice cream tempted her. Jade was eager to taste everything! With her eyes glued to the table, she grabbed a plate and began sampling one snack after another. She started with a candy bar, then chomped down on some potato chips, and next sampled a slice of cake. And that was only the beginning...

You probably know how this story will end—someone is going to have a tummy ache. Jade ate very unhealthy food and too much of it. She was intemperate and did not show any self-control about what she ate and how much of it she ate. How can we truly glorify God when the food we eat makes us sick? As Christians, we need to glorify God in everything, and that includes what we eat, wear, and do.

Daniel and his friends are excellent examples of people who glorified God by their temperance. Just like Jade in our story above, Daniel passed tables every day that were filled with unhealthy foods. Everything looked and smelled so good, and many Hebrew young people who had come to Babylon with Daniel and his friends gave in to temptation. Daniel's parents weren't with him either to tell him what to eat and what not to eat. But he remembered their teachings and obeyed. He and his three friends chose to eat healthy foods like vegetables, fruits, beans, and nuts. When they were thirsty, they drank plain water. God blessed them for honoring Him by making them rulers in Babylon.

Temperance is not just about the food you eat. Temperance affects everything you do. Let's take a look at another example.

Once there were three brothers—Jonathan, Jared, and Jordan. While they looked the same, their characters were quite different. Jonathan was a hardworking boy. He earned straight A's in school and was very active in school clubs and student government. After school, he worked two part-time jobs, as a waiter in a restaurant and at a pet store, before going home to study.

Most nights Jonathan stayed up until 3 AM working on homework and then woke up at 6:30 AM. His parents were worried that he was going to burn himself out, and indeed his health had already started to suffer.

Although Jared was also a talented boy and played the violin beautifully, he was the exact opposite of Jonathan. Unfortunately, instead of earning good grades, Jared had low grades because he never bothered doing his homework. He was lazy and spent most of his day surfing the Internet, playing video games, and watching movies. Jared didn't think that what he did with his time mattered. He wanted to do only what pleased himself.

Both Jonathan and Jared are examples of what temperance is not. Jonathan was intemperate by working himself too hard until he got sick, while Jared didn't work hard enough and wasted the talents God had given him. But the third boy, Jordan, was temperate. He worked hard at school and earned good grades. He worked hard at his job and made his boss happy.

But Jordan also took time to relax by walking in nature and going to bed early every night. He kept his life balanced.

We can learn all about temperance from reading about the life of Jesus. He was balanced in everything He did. He never lost His balance, but was perfect in all things. And because He is perfect, He can help you to keep your balance in life as well.

Have you ever walked on a tightrope? It's a little tricky, isn't it? Temperance is a bit like that. If you lean too far to either side, you will fall. Doing bad things will hurt you, but too much of something good can also end up being bad. Eating junk food isn't healthy, but neither is eating twenty apples one after another. Either action will give you a sick stomach. Just as a small step in the wrong direction will cause you to lose balance and fall off a tight rope, doing too many good things will also cause you to slip. May God help you to keep your balance by being temperate in everything.

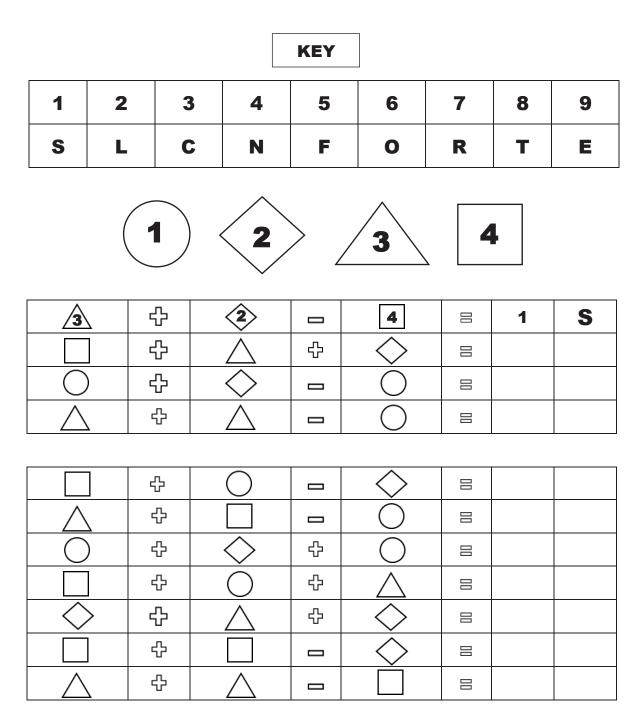
Complete the Bible verse.

"And put a knife to thy ____, if thou be a ___ given to appetite." Proverbs 23.2

Activities

Self-Control

ACTIVITY: To discover the secret words, write the matching number for each shape and solve the math problems; then, write the answer in the column to your right, as well as the letter that matches that number. Follow the example.

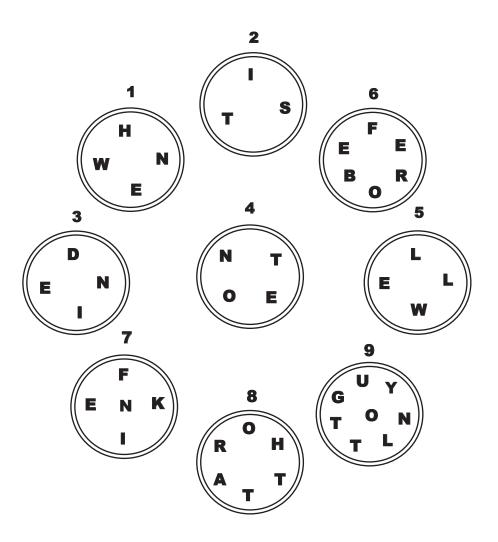


ACTIVITY: Write the missing letter for each word, and then complete the Bible verse by using the matching numbers.

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ACTIVITY: Unscramble each word that is inside a circle, and then, write it in the box with the matching number to complete and read the Bible verse.



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ACTIVITY: Sort the sentence by writing each word into the matching shape.

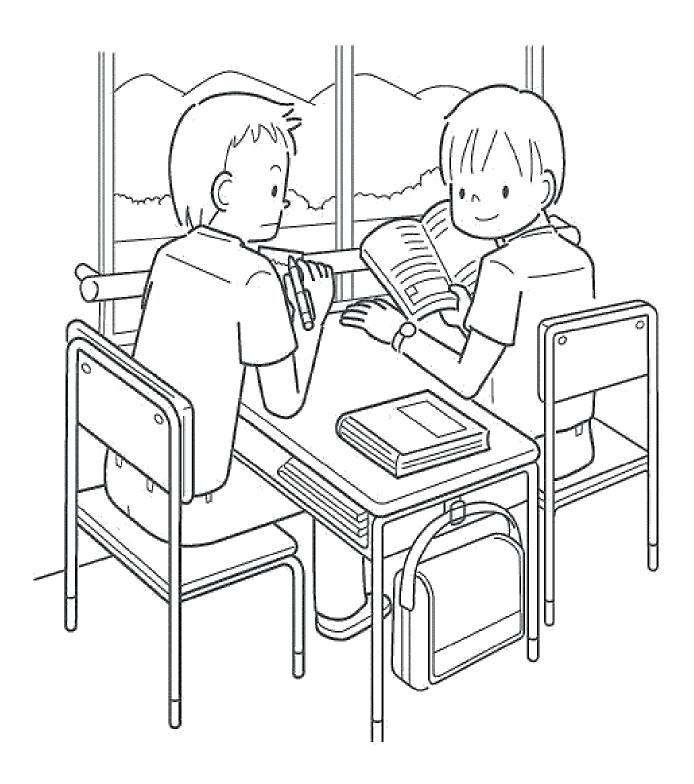
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	Daniel 1:8, NIV – first part

Self-Control

ACTIVITY: Color all the drawings below.







Reading 5

Wednesday, December 9, 2020



"Perseverance'

Written by: Pastor Douglas Francis,

U.S.A.

Summarized by: Manuela Di Franca,

Germany

It was 1992, the year of the Olympic games in Barcelona. The event was the 400-meter sprint semifinals. Derek Redmond lined up at the starting line, along with sprinters from seven other nations. Having already been the world champion in several competitions, he was no stranger to victory. For Redmond though, his former glory came at a steep price. In the course of four years, he had undergone eight surgeries for injuries sustained in the sport. But to a champion, perseverance is the most important thing. The announcers had touted him as a favorite despite the stiff competition. With the world watching, the gun went off.

The sprinters bolted from the starting line. They were not there merely to challenge one another, but to take on history itself. The 400-meter sprint is not a straightforward event. It takes patience just as much as endurance. One wrong turn can make the difference between capturing glory and tasting defeat. Redmond undoubtedly had no desire for the latter. But with roughly 100 meters to go in the race, Derek felt a pop in one leg. He took a few more strides, then collapsed in pain. His dream of capturing gold had come to a crashing halt. On the open field the onlookers saw a man kneeling, almost as if in prayer. Derek Redmond, who had poured his dreams and hopes into preparing for this day, was now the lone soul with a broken hamstring stranded between the start and finish lines. The truth was hard to swallow, but probably no one understood it better than Redmond himself.

Undoubtedly the logical thing for Derek to do was to wait for the medical team to arrive and carry him off on a stretcher. But, to the amazement of everyone, the young man struggled to his feet.

He began to jog slowly. Then suddenly his father came down from the stands and joined his son. They finished the race to the standing ovation of approximately 65,000 spectators. It was a most meaningful finish!

Life is a race

The Bible compares living the Christian life to running a race. "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly...." (1 Corinthians 9:25-26 NIV). Just as running a race with an injury would slow a runner down, so sin gets in the way of your ability to live your life in a way that honors God. Sin consumes your time and energy and takes your focus off God, slowing you down in your life race. The Bible tells you that God does allow life to get difficult at times so you can be made holy. Even though God's discipline is painful, it produces righteousness and peace. Just as elite athletes persevere and push themselves to endure pain during a race, by focusing on plans and goals you are to rely on God for encouragement and strength as you run your life race. He will help you get to the finish line just like in the story of Derek and his father. "And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" *(Hebrews 12:1 NIV).

Persevere in overcoming sin

Just as an athlete works hard to recover from injuries and to become faster, God wants to help you with overcoming the sin in your life. The things that God wants to remove from your life are the opposites of the fruit of the Spirit. Hate, for example, is the opposite of love; complaining and dissatisfaction, of joy; fighting and quarrelling, of peace; impatience, of patience; unkindness,

of kindness; unfaithfulness, of faithfulness; harsh words and actions, of gentleness. And temper tantrums and losing control of words, actions, and emotions are the opposites of self-control. To get rid of each sin, you need to ask God to clean it out of you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You can also find encouragement through meeting with other Christian young people and friends as well as asking God for strength and wisdom.

Persevere in prayer

The Bible says that Elijah was a man, a human being, just like you! When he prayed for fire to fall from heaven to burn up a sacrifice, it burned up. But when Elijah asked God to send rain, he had to ask seven times before God sent the rain.

Sometimes God answers prayers right away, and sometimes you have to keep asking. Other times, God may not answer in the way you expect. You need to be persistent and patient when you pray, waiting for God's answers and trusting that He knows what is best for you.

Persevere in serving God

God gave Noah a pretty big job. God asked him to build a huge boat. Even though he did not live near a lake or ocean, Noah persevered in finishing the job that God had given him. Someday God may give you a hard job to do, too. God might ask you to be friends with someone whom everyone else chooses to ignore. Or He might ask you to forgive a brother or sister who teases you every day. God was pleased with Noah's perseverance, and God will also be pleased with you when you persevere in serving Him and doing what is right.

Complete the Bible verse.

But he that ____ _unto the end, the same ____ saved." Matthew 24:13

Activities

Perseverance

Persevere

Life is a race. (1 Corinthians 9:25-26, NIV)

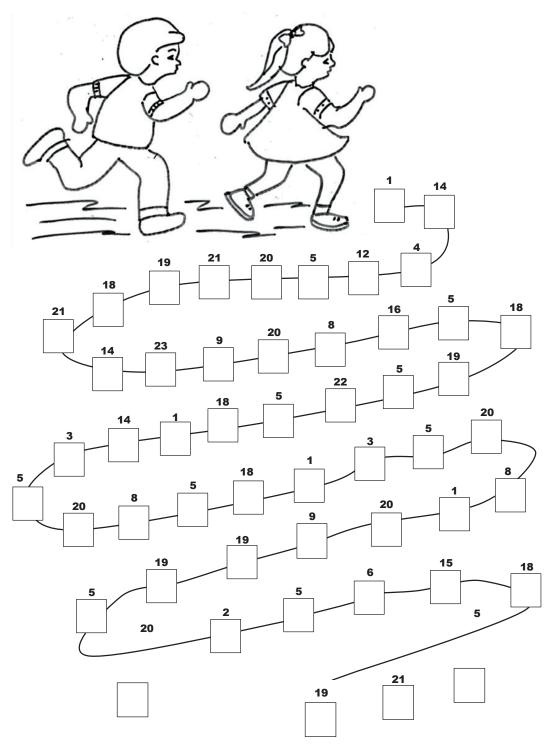
ACTIVITY: Write the missing letters in the four empty rows of the cryptogram. If you write the letters correctly, then you will be able to read an important message at the end. Let's get to work!



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ACTIVITY: Each number represents a letter, so to read the sentence, write each numbered letter in the corresponding box. (Hebrews 12:1, last part.)

A	В	С	D	E	F	G	Н	I	J	K	L	M
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	0	P	Q	R	S	Т	U	V	W	Х	Y	Z
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26



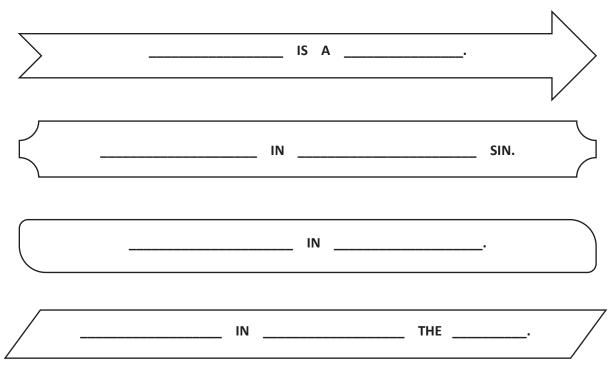
ACTIVITY: Find all the words from the list in the Word Search below. Words are written frontwards, vertical, and diagonal.

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Е	Е	М	I	R	R	Е	Z	I	Α	М	Ν	С
F	0	R	Р	Ν	Υ	>	Е	Е	R	С	Е	I
S	0	С	S	Е	I	0	0	М	I	Ν	Е	Р
Р	Т	R	G	Е	Т	Ν	Ν	С	S	I	Ν	L
Р	R	R	Е	Е	V	Е	G	Е	R	R	S	ı
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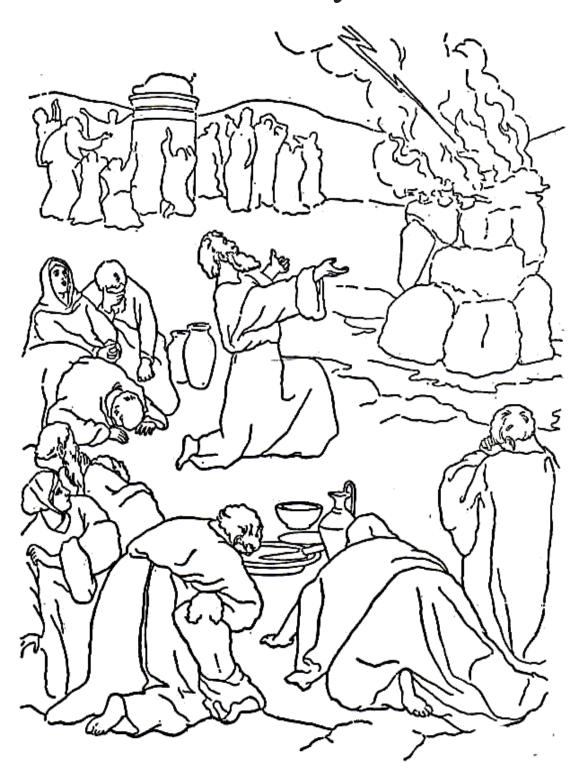
WORD LIST:

- RUNNERS
- DISCIPLINE
- PRIZE
- TRAINING
- FOREVER
- RUN
- PERSEVERANCE
- RACE
- CROWN
- BEFORE
- PRAYER
- STRICT
- COMPETE
- GAME
- EVERYONE
- LAST
- GET

ACTIVITY: With the remaining letters in the Word Search, form the missing words and write them in the shapes below to complete the sentences. Some words have been included to help you.



GOD ANSWERED ELIJAH'S PRAYER





Reading 6

Friday, December 11, 2020



"I Surrender All"

Written by: Pastor Pablo Hunger | U.S.A. Summarized by: Alyssa Seely | U.S.A.

Do you know the song, "I Surrender All"? It is a very popular hymn written by Judson Van DeVenter that is still sung in churches all over the world. But we never would have heard this song if Judson hadn't made an important decision.

Judson was a teacher and an art supervisor in the schools of Pennsylvania in the United States. He was also a musician at his church. Because he was so talented, his friends encouraged him to do missionary work. Judson didn't know what to do. He thought about it and prayed. He wanted to continue his career, but he also felt that he should work for the Lord. Later he said, "For some time, I ... struggled between developing my talents in the field of art and going into full-time evangelistic work. At last the time came when I would indeed surrender all." Judson happily spent the rest of his life working as an evangelist. Through his messages and songs, he spread the gospel all over the United States, as well as in England and Scotland. Because Judson decided to surrender everything to Jesus, God blessed his musical talent as well. And his song "I Surrender All" has been helping people to decide to follow God many, many years after Judson died [1939].

The year 2020 has been filled with signs showing that the coming of Jesus is near. During these past months, one disaster after another has struck the world. Wildfires, earthquakes, the Corona pandemic, wars, famine, tornadoes, and more. Just as Mr. Van DeVenter had to make a decision, we also need to surrender all to God today.

When we do this, we can save both our lives and the lives of those around us. It's time to make a decision! Will you help to share God's love with the whole world? Will you shine a light into the darkness?

Be a Friend to God, and Surrender Everything to Him

We must become friends with God. We can talk to Him through prayer, and He listens to us. Job 22:21 AKJV tells us, "You shall make your prayer to Him, and he shall hear you." But a real friendship goes two ways. We must also listen to Him.

Some people think that becoming part of the church just means adding God to their lives without actually making any real changes. They just say they are Christians, but don't surrender themselves to God and His will. But the word "surrender" is important. When we surrender to God, we give up all control and let Him direct our lives.

One day, a young ruler who was very rich came to talk with Jesus. He wanted to follow Jesus, but he didn't want to change anything in his life. He definitely didn't want to give up his money. Jesus couldn't accept this young man, because he wouldn't surrender everything to God.

When we are baptized, we live for God—not just to please ourselves. Some people may think that living for God is boring and that it's not worth the effort. But genuine living for God is exciting! And it brings big rewards. If you are faithful here on earth, you will receive great treasures in heaven.

God will not force you to do anything you don't want to do. Choosing to live for Him is your free decision. If you accept Him, you will discover the joys of heaven.

If you reject Him, you will lose heaven forever. The things of earth can't offer you real joy. You might find some exciting things here that make you happy for a short time, but nothing will give you lasting joy like Jesus will.

When you fully surrender to God, you will find that you enjoy doing His will. Christians serve others, not because they have to, but because they enjoy helping them. It's true that not everything will be easy. In fact, there will be certain losses as we walk the Christian path. However, we will have all we need because God is our friend and will give us what we need when we need it.

"I GIVE UP!"

In the early 1960s, the editors of Time Magazine were worried about sales slowing down. Hoping to sell more magazines, they planned a program that would mail out ads to lots of people.

At that time, the IBM computer was still new to the business world, and the directors of the magazine wanted to use this new computer. They created a computer program to mail out the ads. However, as is common with computers, something went wrong. As a result, one surprised farmer in Wyoming received 12,634 envelopes with subscription ads for Time Magazine. The farmer, who almost never received any mail, opened one letter after another, each containing the same ad. After reading through thirty or more ads, he wrote out a check for the \$6 subscription fee and sent it to Time Magazine with a handwritten note that said, "I give up!"

Are you ready to surrender to God? Like the farmer who received so many messages, you have received many messages this year from God. He has been calling to you with His love. Make 2021 the year in which you give everything to God. Surrender all of your talents and strength to the service of the Lord and prepare for His soon coming. He will bless you!

Complete the Bible verse.

"My son, give me thine ____, ___ thine eyes Proverbs 23:26.

Activities

Surrender

ACTIVITY: Follow the key to form the words and read the message (each figure represents a letter.) The first word is included as an example.

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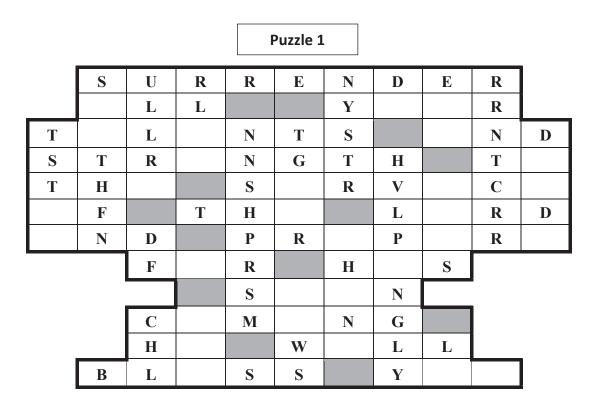
Become Friends with God and Surrender Everything to Him!

ACTIVITY: Write each word in the correct box, according to the reference images. When you are done, you will be able to read the complete Bible verse.

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God is Our Friend!

ACTIVITY: Puzzle 1 has all the consonants needed to complete the message, and Puzzle 2 has all the vowels. Complete each puzzle with the letters that the other one has to read the message. Follow the example given.



					Puzzle 2	2				
	S	U	R	R	E	N	D	E	R	
	A						О	U		
	A		E					A		
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ACTIVITY: Color the following images.



We love God if...



We love and respect our friends.



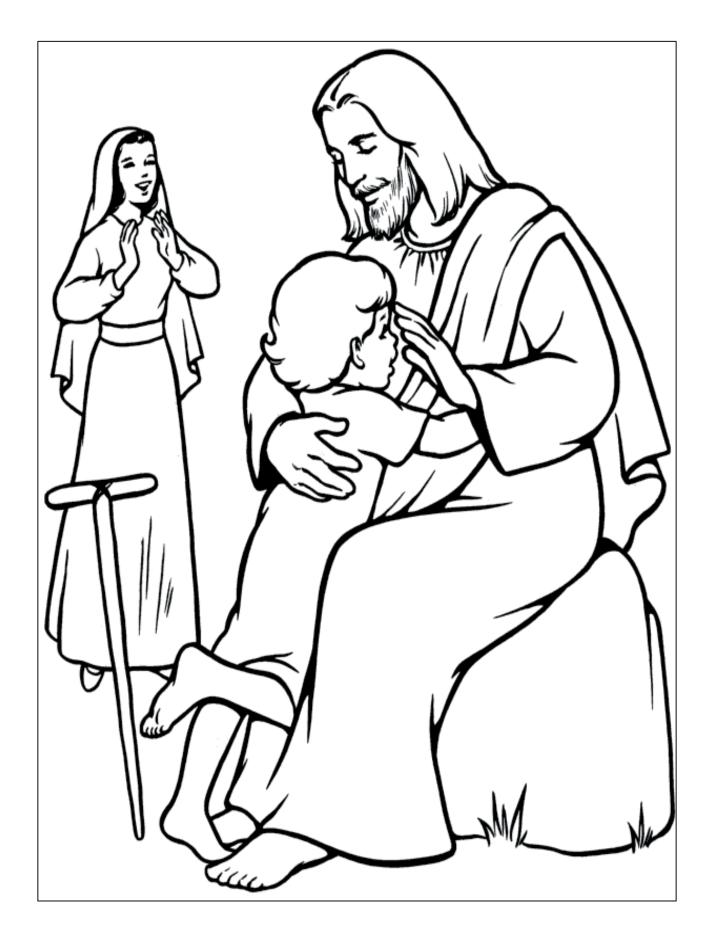
We love and obey mom and dad.



We help all those who need us.



We talk to Him through prayer.



Reading 7

Sabbath, December 12, 2020



"Brotherly Kindness and Divine Love"

Written by: Tzvetan Petkov, U.S.A. Summarized by: Margie Seely, U.S.A.

What is a ladder? It is a tool we use to reach

higher places. We climb up its rungs until we achieve the height we want. This week we have been studying the spiritual ladder in 2 Peter 1: 5-7. This ladder starts with a step of faith and gos up different levels until it finally reaches love. Love is the law of Heaven and the most powerful force in the universe. It is so powerful that it can even change our hearts. "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love." 2 Peter 1:5-7 NIV. Today, we will talk about love.

If you love Me, obey Me

"I love you, Mommy!" little Christian said to his mother. She smiled, then asked him to clean up his toys. "No!" he pouted. "I don't want to clean!" His lower lip stuck out stubbornly as he continued rolling his cars across the floor. "But, Christian," Mommy said, "I thought you loved me." Christian looked up at her with a frown. "I do love you, Mommy," he said sternly, "but I don't want to stop playing." Mommy knelt beside him. "Do you know what love means?" she asked gently. Christian shrugged. "I dunno. I just love you." Mommy smiled and continued. "Christian, love is more than just a nice feeling. It also means to obey. Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments' (John 14:15 KJV). We show our love to God by obeying Him. And we show our love to others by being respectful of them.

The Apostle John told us, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another' (John 13:34 KJV). Our Lord simplified the Ten Commandments into two – love for God and love for our neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). 'And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also' (1 John 4:21 KJV). And so, Christian," Mom said, "because I know you really do love me, I know you will clean up your toys."

Christian looked down at his toys and then up at his mom's smiling face and hurried to clean up quickly. He wanted her to see how much he loved her.

Learning to love

When we were tiny babies, we thought only about ourselves. We cried when we were cold or tired or hungry. We cried until someone took care of us. We didn't care how tired or hungry our mom or dad was. We cared only that what we wanted was given to us. But, as we have grown older, we have had to learn how to love, to think of the needs of others before ourselves. And when we accept Jesus into our hearts, we learn what true love is. "If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:12 ESV.

In fact, the most powerful proof to the world that there is a God is when His people love one another. Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if ye have love for one another." John 13:35 ESV. When the world sees a church filled with different types of people loving one another and caring about one another, the world will want to know how to get what we have. When they see a community of believers who don't gossip

or hate, they will know that God is real. It is impossible for unconverted people to truly love one another. People hate others because of differences of skin color, or the amount of money they have, or the language they speak. People hate others because they believe differently or have disabilities. People hate because God's love is not in their hearts. So, when a group of people do love one another, God is the reason.

Do you know that hate is the same as murder? Hate is the opposite of love. Anyone who does not love the way God loves cannot go to Heaven. The Apostle John tells us, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer...." 1 John 3:15 ESV.

True love is not afraid

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." 1 John 4:18 ESV. Are you afraid to love? If your answer is yes, you are not alone. Most people are afraid to love.

We want to protect ourselves, and so we don't fully open our hearts to others. Often, we love a little and then check to see how the other person responds. If they give love back to us, then we might risk loving a little more. In reality, we love others only as much as they love us. But that's not how God loves.

God loves us so much that He risked everything for us. He opened up His heart and, even before we had decided if we loved Him or not, He sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and suffer and die for us. Jesus was hurt and rejected by the people He came to save. He could have given up, but He didn't. He pushed throuqh the pain and rejection because He wanted us to have the chance to be saved - even if we didn't want to be saved.

When we love like God loves, we will open our hearts completely to others and tell them about Jesus. We will love people so much that we won't be afraid of what they say or do to us. We will just want for them to know the way to salvation. Through our words and actions, we will let all people know that God loves them.

The Apostle Paul loved people like this. He told the believers in Corinth, "Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold...." 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 NIV. Why did he suffer all of this? He didn't have to. But like Jesus, Paul had so much love for people that he gave up everything to tell them about Jesus. "'Even the hardened soldiers who attended [the Apostle Paul] listened to his words and with amazement saw him cheerful and even joyous...' before his death." The Acts of the Apostles, p. 509.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13 KJV.

Start climbing

The Bible tells us that the way of salvation is a process of growing, climbing, stretching, and reaching further and higher in our religious experiences. Peter's ladder has eight steps. Each one gives different qualities of Christian character. The Apostle Paul also talks about three important steps. "And now abideth faith, hope, [love], these three; but the greatest of these is [love]." 1 Corinthians 13:13 KJV. Both men tell us that love is the highest level that we should try to reach.

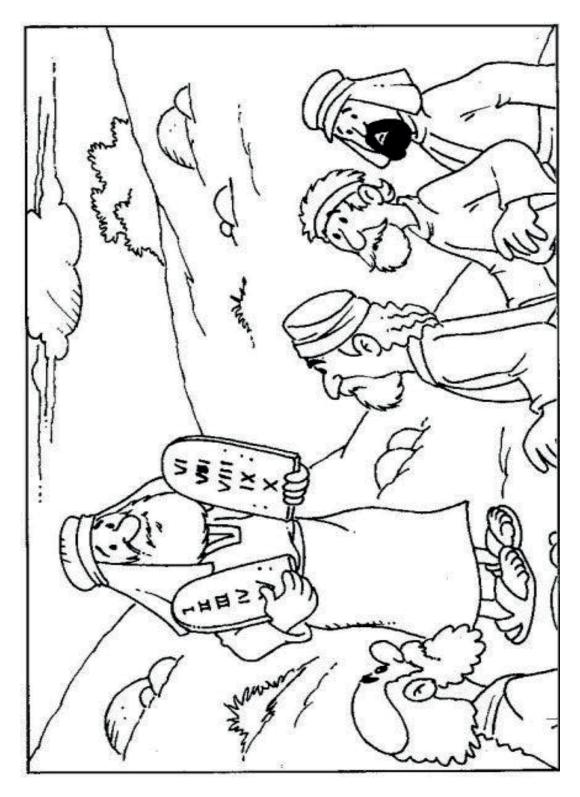
Are you ready to start climbing? The first step is faith. Believe in God and walk after Him. He will lead you and me higher. He will teach us how to be like Him. He will teach us to love as He loved.

One ladder for all

Would you like to know a secret? Jesus is the ladder that connects us to God. Jesus stands with us here on earth. He loves us and calls us to Him. As we learn from Him how to love, we also love others and tell them about Jesus. We reach heaven by holding onto Him. Salvation is a gift given to us by Jesus Christ, who is the only way

to salvation. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:21.

ACTIVITY: Color the drawing.



Activities

Brotherly Kindness and Divine Love

The Spiritual Ladder

ACTIVITY: Fill in the blanks with all the words that are in the boxes at the top with the matching numbers to read the message.

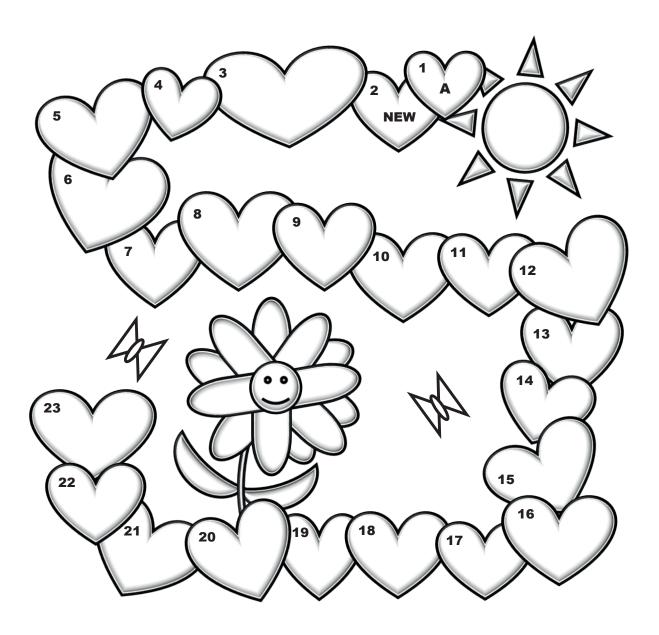
4 VIRTUE	6 SELF-CONT 8 GODLINE		3 ADD
9 BROTHERLY	11 LOVE		1 REASON
2 DILIGENCE	10 KINDNE		7 PERSEVERANCE
But also for this very ¹ _	, gi	ving all ²	
3 to your	faith 4	, to ⁴	
5	, to ⁵	6	
to ⁶	77		, to
7	8	. to ⁸	

_____, and to ⁹_____

If You Love Me, Then Obey Me

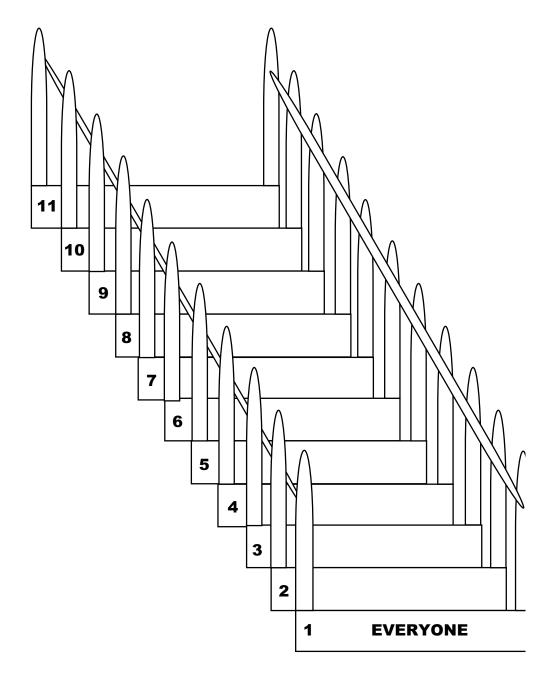
ACTIVITY: Write the correct word in each heart by following the numbers (1-23), so you can read the Bible verse in order. When you have read the verse, color the picture.

9 YE	¹⁵ HAVE	¹⁸ THAT	⁵ GIVE	¹⁰ LOVE	³ COMMANDMENT	⁷ YOU	²² ONE
¹⁴ I	¹³ AS	² NEW	²¹ LOVE	¹⁹ YE	¹² ANOTHER	¹⁷ YOU	¹¹ ONE
4 I	1 A	¹⁶ LOVED	8 THAT	²⁰ ALSO	²³ ANOTHER	⁶ UNTO	(John 13:34)



A Ladder for Everyone

ACTIVITY: Write all the numbered words on the steps of the ladder to read the Bible verse. Match the numbers and follow the example.

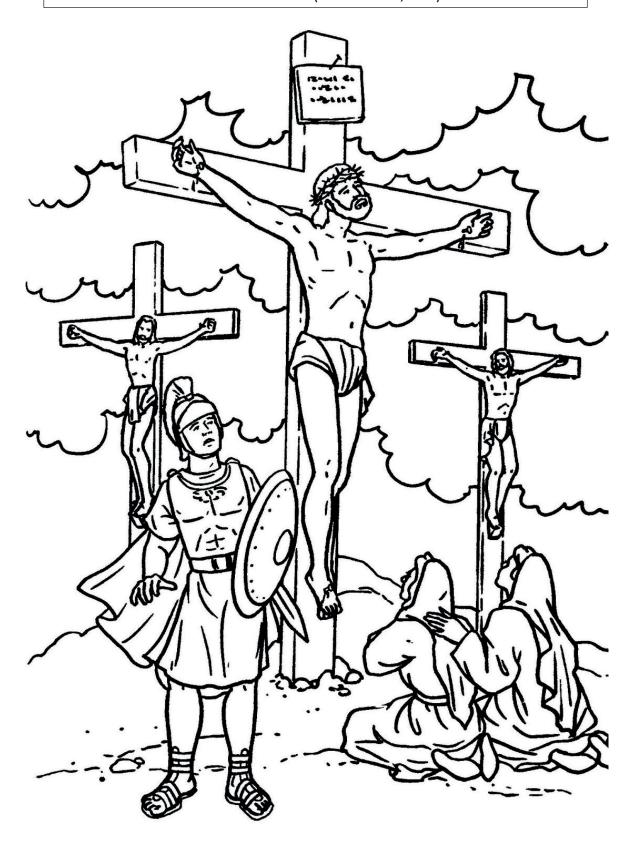


5	2	10	7	3	9
THE	wно	BE	OF THE	CALLS	WILL
11	8	6	1	4	(Acto 2:24 N///)
SAVED	LORD	NAME	EVERYONE	ON	(Acts 2:21, NIV)

"If you love me, keep my commands." (John 14:15. NIV)



"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13, KJV)





This Week of Prayer belongs to:	
Church:	